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Exploring the professional identity and agency of student teachers in multilingual classrooms

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ABSTRACT

While there is now a considerable body of work on teacher identity in the area of language education, much less attention has been given to the question of the extent to which student teachers are enabled to construct identities that are consonant with the opportunities and challenges of current multilingual classrooms. Drawing on a recent large-scale research and development project, this article explores how the student teachers in our study: understood their responsibilities towards pupils for whom English is an Additional Language; perceived their development needs, preparedness and confidence to support EAL pupils; the constraints they encountered; and the opportunities that they utilized to be and act responsively within multilingual classrooms. Findings are contextualized within the policy framework concerning language and the variegated landscape of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England; and framed against apposite perspectives on identity and agency, with a central place being given to socio-cultural theories of identity formation which focus on discourse and practice. Building on the findings, the Discussion points up some of the elements that need to be in place if student teachers are to develop a professional identity that is truly inclusive and responsive to linguistic and cultural *difference*.

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Introduction

Research on teacher identity in the area of language education has gained momentum in the last two decades (Varghese et al. 2016). Despite this momentum, little is understood about how *student teachers'* identities interact with the shifting demographics of pupil populations. There is only a limited number of studies that centre on understanding the degree to which student teachers' identity construction is consonant with the opportunities and challenges of culturally and linguistically differentiated classrooms (e.g. Kayi-Aydar 2015; Beauchamp and Thomas 2009; Foley et al. 2018; Reeves 2009). Accordingly, it seems important to investigate what affordances and constraints student teachers experience in developing professional identities that are sufficiently responsive to *difference* in terms of language, and the cultural knowledge, and forms of knowing and being imbricated within language.

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Structure of the article

This article draws on a recent large-scale research and development project, conducted in England (Foley et al. 2018). It first sets out the policy context that shapes the understanding of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and the response to EAL pupils in schools in England and sketches out the current landscape of ITE in England. A following section sets out how identity and agency are conceptualized in the article. An account is then given of the study's design and methods. The reporting of findings details how the student teachers in our study: understood their responsibilities and work in this more linguistically and socially diverse environment; perceived their development needs, preparedness and confidence to support EAL pupils; and the constraints they faced and the possibilities they saw to be and act responsively within multilingual classrooms. The *Discussion* then reflects on key themes within these findings.

Background

Since the 1960s, significant trends in migration to the UK have resulted in a more linguistically and culturally diverse society. There are currently over 1,619,999 pupils in schools in the maintained sector in England learning English as an additional language. The Department for Education reports that 21.3% of state-funded pupils in primary schools and 17.1% in secondary schools speak, or are exposed to, languages other than English at home (DfE 2020).

Vertovec (2007) introduced the term 'superdiversity' to describe communities with complex histories of language and cultural diversity, such as many multilingual cities across Britain. Added to the diversity in languages is diversity in prior exposure to English, prior experience of schooling, prior literacy experiences, length of residence in England, and the social circumstances of pupils learning EAL. While some localities have experienced such diversity over many years, in other areas only a fairly small minority of pupils speak languages other than English (see Hutchinson 2018). Accordingly, there may be marked differences in the degree to which student teachers encounter EAL pupils in their placement schools.

Policy context

A key principle of government policy in England is that pupils learning EAL in state-funded schools should be educated in the mainstream classroom alongside their peers (DfE 2014a). Mainstreaming is viewed as the approach that promotes educational inclusion and achievement. This commitment and guidance, established since the 1980s, aims to avoid segregated provision and to provide equal opportunities and non-discriminatory practices (DES 1985).

Educational policies in England over the last few decades appear to have been committed to social inclusion, and consider ethnolinguistic diversity as an important and valued characteristic of schools (Costley and Leung 2020, 3). However, Costley and Leung highlight that in practice 'there is, to date, no curriculum guidance for utilizing students' languages other than English in pursuit of learning in school' (2020, 3). As a consequence, pupils learning EAL may be positioned as overhearers of the curriculum and classroom literacy

practices, rather than as active participants in inclusive spaces that connect heterogeneous languages, cultures and identities. As the findings of this study reveal, this lack of guidance on utilizing pupils' languages can be seen to impact on the classroom experiences and professional preparation of student teachers, thus hindering the development of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies.

National curriculum

Despite the growing number of EAL pupils, national policy in England does not provide a great deal of guidance for teachers and school managers. However, The National Curriculum Statutory Guidance, (DfE 2014b, 9) Section 4, does underscore the need to take account of pupils' prior experience in language and education and to provide language support *across* the curriculum. Teachers' engagement with EAL pupils also takes place against the backdrop of the general statements in the National Curriculum of England concerning language and literacy and the detailed requirements that it sets out for English as a subject. There is an unequivocal message in the National Curriculum that the development of language and literacy is in effect the responsibility of all teachers: 'Teachers should develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject' (DfE 2014b, 6.1). This message is reinforced in the guideline on vocabulary development (DfE 2014b, 6.4); and some attention is also given in the National Curriculum to developing the lexis of individual subjects (DfE 2014b, 6.4).

Putting these guidelines into practice clearly requires all teachers to have a foundation of knowledge of the English language and the pedagogical expertise to convey this knowledge to pupils. In addition, the National Curriculum sets out a trajectory of detailed prescriptions for spelling, grammar, vocabulary, phonics, punctuation and language use. If these prescriptions are consistently followed by schools, EAL pupils should be taught in a context where considerable care is being taken over the development of subject-specific vocabulary and literacies.

However, critics of the National Curriculum, such as the UK Literacy Association (UKLA 2016), argue that its concentration on teaching 'grammar' runs the risk of narrowing student teachers' knowledge of language. This may mean that there is a lack of attention to: the pragmatics of communication and how these vary across cultures; the interconnections between language and culture; and how language and identity are inextricably linked. A strong argument can also be made that in contemporary multilingual classrooms, teachers' knowledge about language should not be wholly confined to the English language.

Routes into initial teacher education

There has been significant change in ITE in England in the last few decades, where the main thrusts have been towards the creation of new pathways in teacher education and towards more school-based training. These trends can be seen to be driven by both a neoliberal and a neoconservative agenda (Childs 2013). The paths to teacher qualification open to current student teachers include the 'traditional' university-led routes of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and BA Qualified Teacher Status and school routes, such as School Direct and Teach First. It seems probable that a diversity in entry points is likely

to increase the heterogeneity in the professional formation of student teachers to engage with EAL learners. This variegated landscape of ITE needs to be kept in mind when interpreting the findings that are presented later in the article.

The move towards a more school-based, 'on-the-job' training has attracted a considerable body of critique, including of the effect this has had on the nature of the ITE curriculum (Reay 2006; Childs 2013). Childs (2013), for example, has observed that reducing the number of university-based teacher educators with specialized disciplinary knowledge: 'appears to have achieved the neoconservative/neoliberal agenda of reducing the amount of theory in ITE courses and moving more ITE into schools' (319). In relation to EAL, the danger is that student teachers may not encounter current theory concerning language and language teaching, such as in the area of translanguaging, that is pertinent to their work with EAL learners. If one views a truly inclusive approach to EAL learners as needing to be framed within a wider agenda of social justice and underpinned by theoretical perspectives that bring out the connections between languages, literacies, culture, identity and power, this will not be readily achieved within a more instrumental scheme that views teacher education in terms of 'training.'

Conceptualizing teacher identity

Any investigation of how entrant teachers view their identity needs to keep a considerable number of elements in mind. There is now widespread agreement that identity is dynamic and in a state of continuous change (Varghese et al. 2005; Norton and Toohey 2011; Reeves 2018). At the same time, there are marked differences in how identity in general, and teacher identity in particular, is conceptualized. Following Varghese et al.'s argument that 'an openness to multiple theoretical approaches allows a richer and more useful understanding of the processes and contexts of teacher identity' (2005, 21), we draw in this article on a number of perspectives that are particularly pertinent to our focus and purposes.

Within socio-cultural theories of learning and development, two main approaches to understanding identity are apposite to our current concerns: one which centres on *discourse* and one which centres on *practice*. Looking first at how identities are 'discursively constructed' (Varghese et al. 2005, 40), Gee has noted how the deployment of specific forms of language is imbricated with particular ways of being and acting. He terms these nexes of language forms, identities and ways of acting, capital 'D' discourses. These capital D discourses entail:

> distinctive ways of speaking/listening … writing/reading *coupled* with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specifically recognizable activities (Gee 2008, 155).

Enacting an inclusive teacher identity in a multilingual classroom would appear to require a different capital 'D' discourse from the Discourse that may prevail in predominantly monolingual classrooms. It is also important to recognize, as Masuda (2012, 224) observes, that 'multiple discourses reside alongside each other in social settings and may be compatible or conflicting.' The capital 'D' Discourse concerning EAL learning and learners that student teachers encounter in a university setting may differ considerably from the one that operates in a placement school.

Learning and identity formation are linked as an individual moves from peripheral to full participation in the practices of a particular community or professional group (Wenger 1998). As initially peripheral participants in an already established constellation of practice, student teachers' positionality is not a powerful one; and the situated identity that they may feel they have to display could possibly be in conflict with the more inclusive identity that they wish to enact. Teachers' identity may come to be closely associated with the purposes and practices of a particular subject area. To respond appropriately to EAL learners, teachers may need to widen their sense of identity from their subject domain (Reeves 2009, 34).

Focusing in on identity in practice reminds us that teaching is a fully embodied activity where emotion is 'an influential factor in teachers' approaches to their professional lives and to their identities' (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009, 180). Joy, pride, frustration and despair may be sparked by the particular circumstances in which student teachers find themselves. Kelchtermans (2011) highlights the emotions that may be aroused by 'vulnerability in teaching,' in particular 'vulnerability to inefficacy' when teachers are confronted with the 'limits of their impact' and of 'their professional knowledge and skills' (72).

Teachers' efficacy, or lack of efficacy, in practice and their corresponding levels of confidence, will be powerfully mediated by the semiotic tools (Wertsch 1991) that they have available to them. To act effectively in multilingual classrooms, student teachers clearly need to have a sufficient grounding in knowledge about language, a metalanguage in which to discuss language, and an expansive understanding of what languaging and translanguaging entail. In addition, it would be valuable for them to have a framework of ideas that would enable them to reflect on, and take a reflexive orientation towards, their current and prospective actions and identity within a multilingual setting.

Across the literature on identity (e.g. Holland et al. 1998) and on identity in teaching (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009), agency and identity are seen to be intertwined. The perspective on agency that resonates most with the concerns and findings of the current study is the ecological model proposed by Biesta and his colleagues (Biesta and Tedder 2007). This model views agency as something that is achieved, rather than possessed, that emerges through the interaction of the beliefs, values and attributes that an individual brings to bear on the possibilities for action in a particular context. Biesta and Tedder state:

> that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations (Biesta and Tedder 2007, 137).

Teacher agency can also be thought of, in part at least, in terms of 'teachers' moral purposes and competence as agents of change for inclusive education' (Pantic 2015, 759). Drawing on the writings of Charles Taylor (1991), Edwards (2015) has provided a definition of teacher agency which gives a central place to both responsibility and self-evaluation. Her definition of agency 'emphasizes commitment, responsibility, strong judgements, self-evaluation, connection to the common good and attention to what people do' (779). A following section will outline how the students in our study viewed their own responsibilities as teachers in multilingual classrooms.

Investigating student teachers and EAL

The preceding sections have set out key features of the current context of teacher education in England, and the opportunities, challenges and tensions that students entering the profession may face. Taking these contextual features into account raises the questions of:

- whether entrants to the profession view their identity in ways that are consonant with the reality of multilingual classrooms;
- how committed are teachers entering the profession to supporting the needs of EAL pupils;
- what requisite knowledge they possess; and,
- what opportunities they encounter to enact an inclusive identity.

Data gathered in a recent research and development study allowed us to explore these questions (Foley et al. 2018). This study funded by Unbound Philanthropy and the Bell Foundation built on earlier research and development work (Anderson, Foley, et al. 2016; Anderson, Sangster, et al. 2016) in Scotland. The following paragraphs delineate the general aims of this study, its methods of data collection and the approach taken to the analysis of data.

Overview of the study

Employing a mixed-methods design, the study set out to investigate the extent to which ITE programmes, encompassing all of the current training routes in England, were preparing student teachers to meet the language and literacy needs of EAL pupils, and, to design resources to extend the knowledge base and repertoire of actions of teacher educators and student teachers. Our aim was to represent the *participants'* understandings of, and opinions on, EAL-related topics. This meant that we needed at all stages of the research to be alert to, and reflexive concerning, our own stance on EAL, teacher education, and how best to respond to linguistic and cultural *difference*. Similarly, we had to be attentive to our positioning when conducting interviews with participants and to try to encourage an open expression of views.

Data collection

The study involved surveys across a range of Initial Teacher Education providers throughout England: Survey 1 at the mid-point of students' ITE programme (N = 182), and Survey 2 towards the end of their teacher education year (N = 54). This geographical spread was important given that EAL pupils are not evenly distributed over the country. The surveys gathered information on the students' educational and linguistic backgrounds and investigated:

- their perceptions of, attitudes towards, and development needs concerning EAL,
- responsibilities of educators with different roles in relation to EAL,
- ratings of confidence in their ability to support EAL pupils,
- reports of the extent of the input they received during their course on EAL.

In addition, Survey 1 investigated what they viewed as important areas of CPD input for themselves; and Survey 2 gained ratings of the usefulness for their future career of EAL-related input on specific areas of learning, teaching and assessment. Survey 2 also asked for ratings of the degree to which any input on their training courses and in schools had led to gains in understanding and strategies in relation to EAL.

The wide-angled view gained from the surveys was balanced by more fine-grained, intensive study which centred on two teacher education sites located in different regions where individual interviews and focus groups were held with student teachers (N = 17) and teacher educators (N = 16). Interviews and focus groups with the student teachers at these sites included seeking their views on the topics of:

- how their teacher education programme and schools where they were placed addressed EAL issues,
- their own experiences of teaching EAL pupils in schools and confidence in their ability to meet the language and literacy needs of EAL pupils,
- perceptions of challenges for EAL pupils and for all school students, in developing language and literacy skills.

General approach to the analysis of data

A detailed analysis of the quantitative data within each survey was conducted, and, where this was apposite and justifiable, comparisons were made between responses to the two surveys to reveal points of similarity and contrast over time.

Qualitative data from the interviews and surveys were brought together and closely examined by the individual members of the team who then came together to share insights and questions that had emerged from this exercise in analytical reading and to closely scrutinise each other's interpretations. This initial stage of analytical reading provided the basis for the second stage of analysis that involved individuals and then the team as a whole inductively generating 'substantive categories' (Maxwell 2013, 108). In other words, we were guided by the aim of creating categories that centred on the 'description of participants' concepts and beliefs' and stayed close to the data (Maxwell 2013, 108). The research team then scrutinised the categories that emerged from this process and the interpretations based on them (Foley et al. 2018).

Features specific to the analysis in this article

The sub-set of findings from this project that are reported in the current article which centre on student teacher identity in relation to EAL and difference involved an additional stage of analysis. We had the added interpretive task of examining our findings against extant theorizing concerning teacher identity. We found that the framing of key findings could not readily be achieved through a single theoretical lens. Accordingly, as a preceding section has revealed, we have drawn quite widely from theorizing on identity and agency to provide a clearer and more nuanced representation of our findings.

Findings

Background of the student respondents

We set out in Survey 1 to gain a picture of the students' prior educational and linguistic experience. (There was a fairly even division between primary (52.2%) and secondary (47.8%) school student teachers in this survey). To discover the extent to which student respondents had themselves experienced any crossing of national borders in their schooling, they were asked to identify the location of their primary and secondary schooling. 13.2% had been educated outside the UK, with two thirds of this group being educated in Europe. 8.8% of respondents indicated that they had been or were EAL/ESL learners—a finding which can be seen to raise the question of how well ITE programmes respond to participants who themselves are EAL learners. Almost a tenth (9.3%) of respondents had gained an academic qualification in teaching English language. Although such qualifications are distinct from those in EAL, they could be expected to give these respondents a foundation of knowledge about language.

Only 37.9% of the total sample indicated that they spoke a language or languages in addition to English. The languages spoken were largely those of Western European countries, with only a small number speaking Slavic languages. Asian, African and Middle Eastern languages were scarcely represented. The majority of this sample of student teachers were thus monoglot in English and had not experienced any crossing of national boundaries in their own education.

Responsibility towards EAL pupils

Central to teachers' identity and agency in multilingual classrooms is the degree of responsibility that they view *themselves* as having for meeting the needs of EAL pupils. Do they see themselves as having a central role to play, or do they locate that responsibility elsewhere, (e.g. with school management or English teachers)? Accordingly, the respondents in both surveys were asked to rate the degree of responsibility that educators in different roles have in relation to EAL pupils.

Table 1 shows that supporting EAL pupils was not perceived as being simply a matter for school management and English teachers, with 70.2% of respondents in Survey 1 and 75.9% in Survey 2 viewing 'class teachers of subjects other than English' as having either 'very large responsibility' or 'large responsibility.' Table 1 shows that 62.9% in Survey 2 as opposed to 47.5% in Survey 1 believed that ITE providers had 'very large' or 'large responsibility,' a pattern of response which can be read against comments presented later expressing concerns about their lack of preparation in the area of EAL.

Recognizing the linguistic knowledge and experience of EAL pupils

Survey questions also explored the degree to which student teachers were open to recognizing the cultural, linguistic and literacy knowledge and experience of EAL pupils. Table 2 presents the percentages of respondents to both surveys who answered within the categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to statements that probed the extent to which they felt that the prior linguistic knowledge and experience of EAL pupils should be recognized. As Table 2

shows there was a high level of agreement with all of the questions in this set in Survey 1, and an even higher level of agreement in Survey 2.

A more conflicted picture emerges, however, when this set of responses is set against responses to a question posed in both surveys probing beliefs about how English is best acquired. In contrast to the very positive response to the statement '**Schools should recognize and value the languages that their pupils speak at home and in their communities'** presented in Table 2, there was a division in reaction to the item '**EAL pupils will learn better if they can use their home languages in the classroom.'** In addition, there was no positive shift in opinion between Survey 1 and Survey 2. Table 3 illustrates the contrast between these two sets of responses.

One interpretation of the contrast in response to these two items is that a considerable number of these student teachers may have held what can be interpreted in Gee's (2008,

Table 1. Ratings of responsibility by role.[a]

Response options	Very large responsibility	Large responsibility	Some responsibility	Little responsibility	No Responsibility
School management	34.4% (62) *37.0% (20)*	40.6% (73) *40.7% (22)*	19.4% (35) *20.4% (11)*	4.4% (8) *1.9% (1)*	1.1% (2) *0% (0)*
English teachers	28.3% (11) *22.2% (12)*	53.3% (96) *57.4% (31)*	15.0% (27) *20.4% (11)*	2.2% (4) *0% (0)*	1.1% (2) *0% (0)*
Class teachers of subjects other than English	26.4% (47) *22.2% (12)*	43.8% (78) *53.7% (29)*	24.7% (44) *24.1% (13)*	3.9% (7) *0% (0)*	1.1% (2) *0% (0)*
ITE providers	11.3% (20) *18.5% (10)*	36.2% (64) *44.4% (24)*	43.5% (77) *33.3% (18)*	6.8% (12) *3.7% (2)*	2.3% (4) *0% (0)*

[a]Survey 1 results are shown in plain text; Survey 2 results in italics.

Table 2. Recognizing EAL pupils' linguistic knowledge and experience.

	Survey 1		Survey 2	
Response options	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree
'Schools should recognize and value the languages that their pupils speak at home and in their communities.'	55.1%	34.7%	62.9%	33.3%
'It is important for all teachers to know what languages their pupils speak at home.'	54.2%	39.5%	66.6%	31.5%
'Knowing about their pupils' schooling before coming to the UK is necessary for all teachers.'	44.6%	44.1%	55.6%	37.0%
'It is important for all teachers to know about their pupils' literacy skills in languages besides English.'	36.5%	46.1%	50.0%	42.6%

Table 3. Recognizing and valuing home languages vs. Using home languages in the classroom.[a]

Response options	'Strongly agree' and 'Agree'	'Unsure'	'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree'
'EAL learners will learn better if they can use their home languages in the classroom.'	43.8% *42.6%*	42.1% *35.2%*	14.1% *22.2%*
'Schools should recognize and value the languages that their pupils speak at home and in their communities.'	89.8% *96.2%*	2.8% *1.9%*	7.4% *1.9%*

[a]Survey 1 results are shown in plain text; Survey 2 results in italics.

155) terms as conflicting discourses concerning the place and value of 'home languages' in the classroom.

Perceived development needs in relation to EAL

To identify what student teachers regarded as important in relation to EAL and to guide the development of resources, a set of items in Survey 1 asked them to rate the degree of importance for their future careers of input on the specific EAL-related aspects of learning, teaching and assessment that are listed in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that only a very small number of respondents rated these aspects as 'not important,' with only two or three individuals using this response category for many of the questions. For most of the items on this list a, sometimes large, majority of the student teachers answered within the categories 'essential' or 'very important.'

A similar picture emerged in Survey 2 which deployed a different set of questions which centred on everyday teaching tasks, with the response categories of very useful, useful, some use, little use, not required. Table 5 lists the percentage of respondents who answered within the categories 'very useful' and 'useful' to this set of questions.

It can be seen from Table 5 that student teachers were not simply focusing on the practicalities of 'devising resources/materials' but were also attending to the social integration of EAL learners and to drawing 'appropriately on EAL learners' own linguistic and cultural background.' A positive reading of the responses to the set of questions in Table 5 is that

Table 4. Ratings in Survey 1 of the importance of specific areas of EAL-related input.

Response options	Essential	Very important	Important	Fairly important	Not important
Specific input on how a second/additional language is learned	27.8% (49)	31.8 (56)	23.3% (41)	15.9% (28)	1.1% (2)
Recognizing the specific language that can cause challenges for pupils learning EAL within your subject area	32.0% (56)	36.0% (63)	25.7% (45)	5.1% (9)	1.1% (2)
The development of literacies	24.6% (43)	36.0% (63)	30.9% (54)	6.8% (12)	1.7% (3)
Learning literacy in a new/additional language	28.2% (49)	33.9% (59)	27.6% (48)	8.6% (15)	1.7% (3)
Language across the curriculum	31.0% (54)	31.6% (55)	27.6% (48)	6.9% (12)	2.9% (5)
Learning vocabulary in a new/additional language	29.4% (52)	32.2% (57)	28.8% (51)	5.6% (10)	3.9% (7)
Learning grammar in a new/additional language	24.1% (42)	31.0% (54)	30.5% (53)	10.9% (19)	3.5% (6)
The importance of academic language	14.8% (26)	28.4% (50)	38.6% (68)	15.3% (27)	2.8% (5)
Theories of bilingualism/multilingualism	20.1% (35)	19.0% (33)	32.2% (56)	24.7% (43)	4.0% (7)
Training in cultural/diversity awareness	35.1% (61)	29.9% (52)	28.2% (49)	5.7% (10)	1.1% (2)
Assessing EAL/bilingual learners	44.8% (77)	29.1% (50)	22.1% (38)	2.9% (5)	1.1% (2)

Table 5. Ratings of usefulness for their future career of EAL-related input on the following aspects of learning, teaching and assessment.

Response options	'Very useful' and 'Useful'
General input on learning/teaching an additional language	92.6%
Recognizing language that can cause challenges	92.6%
Devising resources/materials	92.6%
Differentiation of content/activities	92.6%
Involving EAL learners in group work	94.5%
Involving EAL learners in whole class work	90.7%
Language for conceptual understanding of your subject(s)	92.6%
Developing EAL learners' vocabulary	98.1%
Drawing appropriately on EAL learners' own linguistic and cultural background	92.6%
Creating appropriate assessments	87.0%
Providing effective feedback	82.0%
Involving EAL learners socially in the life of the classroom and school	94.3%

these student teachers were viewing developing across this wide front as distinctly valuable for their future work. A more critical reading is that at this late stage in their teacher education, they still required 'general input on learning/teaching an additional language' and other central facets of EAL education.

Prepared to meet the needs of EAL pupils?

A reading of these findings which is critical of these students' professional preparation in relation to EAL is given force by negative observations they made on the input they had received. The students were asked in Survey 2 in an open response question to indicate if they 'had any input during the institution-based part of your course directly related to working with EAL/bilingual learners?' The general picture that emerged from responses to this question was of a modest to a distinctly limited level of input concerning EAL, with some respondents stating that the only input they had received was a single lecture. A few answers did, however, report a more extensive experience.

> Yes. We completed a 'buddy initiative' whereby we paired up with EAL students and took part in various activities with them over the course of 6 weeks. We then completed an essay on our experiences and reflected on the barriers to teaching EAL. We also worked closely with MFL students and took part in a teaching workshop which allowed a select group of students to teach a sport in a different language.

Student teachers were also asked in Survey 2: 'While you were in schools did you receive any specific training in relation to meeting the language and literacy needs of pupils learning EAL?' Almost half of the respondents to this question stated that they had no input related to EAL while in schools. As a separate issue, the focus group interviews with student teachers in our two main research sites revealed marked differences across schools in the extent of their contact with EAL pupils.

In addition, Survey 2 asked for ratings of the degree to which any input on their training courses and in schools had led to gains in understanding and strategies in relation to EAL. There was a somewhat positive pattern of response concerning 'general understanding of the needs of EAL learners': **no/very little understanding**, 13.2%; **some increase in understanding**, 66%; **considerable increase in understanding**, 20.8%.

Looking at the figures for gains in 'strategies and ideas,' the spread of responses here may well reflect the variation in input and experience across this group of student teachers: **no/very little increase in strategies and ideas**, 26.4%; **some increase in strategies and ideas**, 50.9%; **considerable increase in strategies and ideas**, 22.6%.

Confidence concerning their ability to support EAL pupils

Teachers clearly not only need to possess the competence to enact an inclusive identity within multilingual classes but also to have the confidence to do so. Questions in both surveys set out to gain a sense of how confident the student teachers felt in their ability to support EAL pupils. There was considerable variation in the ratings of confidence in Survey 1: **not confident at all**, 5%; **little confidence**, 26%; **some confidence**, 41%; **confident**, 25%; **very confident**, 3%. The figures for Survey 2 revealed a certain increase in confidence, although it can be regarded as a matter of concern that around a fifth of respondents still had 'little confidence': **not confident at all**, 0%; **little confidence**, 18%; **some confidence**, 43%; **confident**, 35%; **very confident**, 4%.

The variability within the pattern of response concerning confidence in each survey clearly needs to be read against the variation in the level of support and degree of experience concerning EAL that has been reported in the preceding sections.

Issues concerning the confidence to support EAL pupils also emerged in the focus group interviews and appeared to be linked to limitations in input and in the practice observed in schools. There was a strong impression from the student interviews in both main sites that there was not enough modelling of responsive practice in relation to EAL from their programmes. Some felt that this may have been partly a result of a lack of tutor expertise.

There was a clear perception across primary and secondary student teachers in a focus group in one site that some of the pupils learning EAL they encountered were not getting the kinds of support they needed. This recognition impacted on their own confidence, arousing feelings of 'vulnerability to inefficacy' (Kelchtermans 2011, 72). The extract below highlights such challenges:

> And then occasionally, sort of, you would have moments where suddenly you think that this boy was sitting across the classroom, and he was maybe sitting there not doing anything 'cause a lot of it is just straight over his head…But yeah, it's when you don't have the support in the class, or if you don't have any of the sort of, targeted EAL interventions then I worried that, you know, we weren't giving him the time he needed to, sort of, pick up the language.

The following accounts reveal how individual student teachers were struggling to think about complex language issues, to understand *difference* and the pedagogical approaches required in multilingual contexts:

> We've got an English only policy in all classrooms. And they're not allowed, unless I invite, you know, if I said, 'Oh, can you explain'. Other than that they're not allowed to speak any other language than English. But at social times it's very much encouraged 'cause they need, you know, so they've got that identification with everybody who speaks their language and comes from their culture and, yeah, freedom of choice. (Student 1).

> Yeah, I encourage my pupils to write in their language. But I kind of refrain from them from speaking in their language unless I'm trying to speak to somebody in English and they're looking at me completely blank face, and I look to another and say, 'Can you, please, help me?'

> And they'll translate to what I'm saying. But even though I encourage them to write and then translate it, I try and get them to speak, to have conversations in English (Student 2).

The first extract shows clearly how student teachers' interactions with EAL pupils can be constrained by school policies and practices; and in both extracts one can detect competing discourses around the use of home languages.

Emergence of culturally sensitive pedagogies

The focus group interviews also revealed the ways in which a few student teachers were acting in an agentic manner to achieve inclusion. The following extract exemplifies how one student teacher made the decision to actively recruit other cultural perspectives on a text as a core part of literacy practices.

> And last week I did *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling, so I had [a boy of Indian heritage] describing all the terms to the children and clarifying the words. And I let him basically lead the session.

A further example of a student teacher determining to widen out classroom practices and enact an inclusive teacher identity is provided in the following extract. The extract gives the sense of an ethically aware individual who recognizes and is attempting to negotiate the moral complexities that may arise in a multilingual/multicultural classroom:

> Something just, kind of, to add to this kind of idea that we're not really sure sometimes when people have arrived how advanced are they. To what extent we need support, etcetera. For myself, and maybe this is just, sort of, for my area; because I'm a history teacher and I do a lot of politics and I do a lot of war. I do, like, modern, sort of, international relations. For me at times it can be a little bit iffy if I'm not sure where the student's from. So, for example, a Sri Lankan girl, and she's wonderful, and I do teach bits and pieces about the Tamil Tigers, and her family were directly involved and had to leave due to the violence within that region. And obviously in knowing that, that would change what I'm teaching, or how I'm teaching it to some extent, because I'd never want there to be, sort of, this underlying tone of almost are we pro- or anti-immigration. Is it okay?

In these preceding extracts, student teachers have chosen to act to develop their own pedagogies to promote an inclusive mainstream classroom and to limit the marginalization of pupils learning EAL. While there is still much scope for these novice teachers to develop further knowledge and skills to support and fully engage pupils learning EAL, these accounts display a growing awareness of *difference,* coupled with the commitment and degree of self-confidence that are required to enact an inclusive teacher identity within linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Discussion

Before we take ahead a discussion of the findings reported in preceding sections, a note of caution is in order concerning their generalizability. There are strong similarities between the findings of the study reported here and those of previous projects we have conducted in this area in Scotland, for example Anderson, Foley, et al. (2016), Anderson, Sangster, et al. (2016). While this suggests that the findings reported here may possess some degree

of generality within the UK, we recognize that it would be inappropriate to generalize them to other settings. A preceding section has set out the features of policy, curriculum and ITE in England that are likely to impinge on the professional formation and identity of student teachers. A different picture may well emerge in countries that have different approaches to teacher education, goals of schooling, and perspectives on language learning.

The section *Conceptualizing Teacher Identity* has pointed up the multifaceted nature of teacher identity and its development; and the article has explored the following facets of student teacher identity in relation to EAL pupils:

- whether entrants to the profession view their identity in ways that are consonant with the reality of multilingual classrooms;
- how committed are they entering the profession to supporting the needs of EAL pupils;
- what requisite knowledge they possess; and,
- are they afforded the opportunities to act as inclusive teachers?

Citing Edwards (2015), we have noted how commitment and responsibility can be regarded as central aspects of teacher identity. Our quantitative and qualitative findings seem to indicate that the student teachers in our sample did have a sense of responsibility and commitment to meeting the needs of pupils learning EAL. It would thus appear that personal values of inclusiveness were featuring in the development of their teacher selves.

Our study also revealed that the student participants recognized the need to develop knowledge and strategies across a broad front in relation to EAL. However, it does not paint a reassuring picture of the extent to which they had acquired the knowledge to securely underpin the kind of professional identity that is consonant with the demands of multilingual, multicultural classrooms. It is a matter of concern that towards the end of their teacher education programme around a quarter of the student participants indicated that they had achieved 'no/very little' increase in strategies and ideas related to EAL and around a fifth still had 'little confidence' in their ability to support EAL learners. In addition, there was evidence of the presence of conflicting discourses concerning EAL, in particular in relation to the place and value of 'home languages' in the classroom.

An overview of the study's findings does not support a simple, black-and-white deficit view of ITE related to EAL and we have noted the challenges posed to the initial teacher curriculum by the policy thrust towards a more instrumental approach to teacher 'training.' It does, however, show variation in the extent and adequacy of the coverage of EAL.

In preceding publications we have made recommendations concerning how this situation could be addressed (Foley et al. 2018; Anderson, Sangster, et al. 2016) and have devised resources to support ITE in relation to EAL (see Foley et al. 2018). Our recommendations take account of the current variegated landscape of teacher education in England and place initial teacher education in the context of career-long learning. A central thrust of our recommendations is to advocate a 'layered approach' that recognizes the need first of all for a comprehensive programme of development to build a sound foundation of understanding, knowledge and skills relating to EAL among teacher educators and mentors in universities and schools (Anderson, Sangster, et al. 2016, 183). Secondly, within ITE itself, a number of 'core' sessions on EAL for student teachers could give a grounding of knowledge and strategies and foreground questions of social justice,

equity and inclusion. Input could then be infused through individual subjects, with the accent on aiding student teachers to make *all* lessons more accessible to, and inclusive of, the multilingual and multicultural pupils whom they will encounter. Such an approach would position diversity as a core construct in pedagogical approaches for multilingual contexts.

It has been noted that almost half of the respondents in Survey 2 stated that they had no input related to EAL while in schools and interview participants described how they were constrained by the 'English-only' policy of some placement schools. Unfortunately, such policies can inadvertently promote a nationalistic agenda of schooling, where English as the dominant language is viewed as the only legitimate form of linguistic expression and identity that is valued in schools. Elements of inner conflict were evident as student teachers had to position themselves within such monoglot policies. These students were in effect not being given the opportunity to *practise* an inclusive identity. Clearly if student teachers are to develop a professional identity that is truly inclusive, and responsive to diversity at its core, they need not only the requisite commitment, dispositions, knowledge and skills. They also require environments which will foster, (rather than suppress), the practice of such an identity and the *achievement* of agency (Biesta and Tedder 2007, 137). The earlier section on the *Policy Context* brought out the ambiguities and tensions within current policies in England – ambiguities and tensions which can be interpreted as, in part at least, giving rise to distinct variations across schools in their policy and practice towards EAL pupils.

At the same time, we have illustrated how some students were exploiting opportunities to engage students learning EAL and displaying a sensitive awareness of the cultural background of these students. They can be viewed as having a *relational* understanding of their own identity and that of their students, approaching identity not 'in some abstract sense but … in relation to these particular students' (Varghese et al. 2005, 36) they were encountering in their classes.

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